

# Fellowship Interviews and More



'Tis the end of September as I write this letter, and much is going on: fellowship interviews have begun. Lots of black suits and white shirts march along like a waddle of penguins (were they in the water, they would make up a raft). It is only the second week and already I am bored of giving the same introductory spiel, ever trying to make it both informative and humorous.

Each year, I discuss the history of our hospital. I begin with the establishment of Georgetown University School of Medicine in 1851, during the time of James K. Polk—and then quiz the candidates on the accomplishments of that little-remembered president. Georgetown University Hospital was founded in 1898 as a 33-bed unit run by nuns, and eventually became part of a multibillion-dollar not-for-profit corporation.

Regarding the interviews, one candidate had read my prior editor's letters on fellowship application and was prepared for what he was getting into with me. I was pleased to learn that he had interesting hobbies to discuss—such as cycling!

In the recommendation letter for another candidate, a mentor stated that the young chap had always acted as if he wanted to be a superhero. So, I gave him the chance. I mentioned that part of the letter and asked, if given the opportunity, which superhero would he be? He pondered a bit and then stated it would be Batman but without the cape, because capes get stuck in things and can become tangled. Why Batman? Because he does his duty without having superpowers, unlike Superman and Spider-Man. Personally, I would prefer to be someone who has a bit of something extra: Super Doctor (not to be confused with Dr Who), who could heal patients with even the most advanced conditions. Or someone else who embodies talents I have yearned for. The would-be Batman ended up receiving a low rating from me for his lack of imagination, an opportunity squandered.

I expressed my frustrations with the duty hour regulations imposed by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education with one woman who, as it turns out, was participating in a randomized test of the concept. She was in the regulated group, whereas one of her friends at another hospital was in the unregulated group. Her friend

was far happier and felt that he not only was learning more, but was providing excellent patient care.

Following one interview, a candidate e-mailed me to thank me for enlightening her about the importance of Kenny Rogers in medical decision-making (see my October 2015 letter for advice from "The Gambler").

During my conversation with another charming young woman, we discussed how the life of an academic affords many options: patient care, research, lecturing, traveling, writing, consulting, and editing. I noted that there comes a time, however, when it is appropriate to give up some of those roles: dropping off boards, resigning from editorships, abdicating a committee chair. She inquired, how do you fill that void? Great question! Life is full of opportunities, and new ones always seem to come along. When all that ends, when one is no longer relevant, then perhaps it is time to do the dreaded *R* word.

Another important event is our Lymphoma Research Ride, which is taking place on September 25th. It is the 10th year, and I will review in next month's issue what has become a large part of my life and that of my wife and a number of our friends. It is never too late to support the worthy cause ([www.lymphoma.org](http://www.lymphoma.org)).

But what has become so omnipresent is the upcoming election. From morning to night, our television no longer shows *NCIS* or *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*. All I hear is MSNBC, from *Morning Joe* to the 11 o'clock news with Brian Williams (if I can stay up that late). The polls seem to drift from moment to moment, altered by a cough or a word, yet barely nudged by acts that engender disbelief. Unfortunately, this election has become a war of words and accusations, not of plans and hope. The first candidate to discuss such issues as improving health care, increasing the research budget, and advancing education at all levels will be the one worth listening to.

Until next month...

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce D. Cheson". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Bruce D. Cheson, MD